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2/ LUKEWARMNESS *in Religion,*
represented and reprov'd.

IN TWO 7
S E R M O N S

Preached at the
Merchants-Lecture,
A T
S A L T E R S - H A L L :

November 2. and 16. 1731.

To which is added,
A DISCOURSE concerning
FALSE ZEAL.

By *W. HARRIS* D. D. 

L O N D O N :

Printed for RICHARD FORD, at the *Angel* in the
Poultry, near *Stocks-Market*. M.DCC.XXXII.

(Price One Shilling.)

LUTHERANISM in Religion
represented and approved.

IN TWO

SERMONS

Preached at the

Merchants Lecture



SAL-HALL

November 16. 1791.

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T O T H E
R E A D E R.

 *HO' the following Discourses, which are wholly practical, were neither composed nor preached, with any thought of publishing them; yet I was not unwilling to yield to the opinion of some worthy persons, who have the interest of serious religion at heart, in sending them into the world, because I don't know that the two extremes of zeal have been purposely considered any where; and, I fear, the subject is but too seasonable to the present state of the world about us. If they may be of the least service to-*

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(iv)

wards the reviving a spirit of practical religion among us, and exciting and guarding the minds of men, in what so greatly concerns them; I shall reckon it a great felicity, and think myself obliged to thankfulness to God.



4 OC 58



REV. iii. 15, 16.

I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot: So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

TH ESE words are a message from Christ to the church of *Laodicea*, which is mentioned in the Epistle to the *Colossians*, chap. iv. 16. and which, whether it be considered only as one of the seven churches of *Asia*, in the first and literal sense; or as describing one of the successive states of the christian church in after-ages, agreeable to the prophetic stile of the rest of the book; is however certainly proper to represent like things in like circumstances, in all christian churches, by

a moral accommodation, and like reason of the case: and, as the Apostle speaks of the Jewish Church, with respect to the Christian; *these things are our examples*, 1 Cor. x. 6. They represent to us the temper and state of this church at that time, and the fate which was like to attend it upon that account.

THEY are introduced with great solemnity, to shew the truth and importance of the case, and awaken our attention and regard: *And unto the church of Laodicea, write these things, saith the Amen, the faithful witness, the beginning of the creation of God: i. e.* He who is truth it self, and may safely be depended upon in all the declarations of the will of God to men; and is the principle and author of all the creatures, *or by whom all things were made. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot*: This was their temper and state. They had the form and profession of religion, without gross corruption in their faith and worship, with which they are never charged; but they had not the life and power of it among them. If they were not void of all life under a profession of religion, they were not however fervent and zealous in it: so it is opposed to *being zealous*, ver. 19. *I would thou wert cold, or hot*: This is spoken after the manner of men, and in condescension

sion to our way of conceiving; and must be understood not simply and *absolutely*, as if it were his will they should be cold, but only comparatively speaking; *q. d.* If thou wert one or other, thou wouldst be more consistent with thyself, and I should more easily determine the case, and know better what to do with thee: If thou wert quite cold, thou wouldst be fit for immediate destruction; and if hot, worthy of approbation. *But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, χλιαρός **, tepid, between one and the other, in a state of indifference: *I will spue thee out of my mouth.* — This was the threatening denounced upon her, and the fate like to befall her upon this account, and suitable to the nature of the crime. The expression is used in the old Testament for *dispeopling* a nation, and in the new, for Jer. ix. 19. *removing* a church state.

IN speaking to this subject, I shall,

I. EXPLAIN the *nature* of the sin, and shew what this *lukewarmness* is, which is here charged upon this church.

* *Χλιαρός* is only used in this place in the new Testament, but is often used in profane authors, and always in this sense. So *χλιαρόν ἔδωκε*. Arhanæ. *ἐλαίω δὲ χλιαρῷ ἀναμίξεν*. Gal. *χλίαρα ἐδέσμευσε*.

II. REPRESENT the evil of it. And then apply it.

I. To *explain* it. In the general I observe, that the expressions are *figurative*, and designed to represent by a sensible image, the temper and disposition of mens minds with respect to religion. To be *cold* in this sense, is to have *no* sense of God and religion in our minds, or any regard to it in our lives; and not to be at all affected and concerned about it. To be *hot*, on the other hand, is to have a *lively* sense and concern of mind, and a due regard to it; to be fervent and zealous in religion. And accordingly to be *lukewarm*, and *neither cold nor hot* *, lies in the middle between them both, and is exclusive of both. 'Tis, not to be corrupted with gross errors and wickedness, or void of all concern or regard to religion, on the one hand; and yet not to have a due regard to it, on the other: either to the doctrines and principles of it, or the proper influence it ought to have upon us. 'Tis a proper state of *indifference* about religion, without life or zeal.

I

* Nam quibus potentia non est in pejorem transferendi statum, nec interpellandi quidem optimum. Frigidum, inquit, aliquid & callidum novimus: inter utrumq; tepidum est: sic aliquis beatus est, aliquis miser: aliquis nec miser nec beatus. *Sen. Ep. 92.*

I shall consider it more distinctly in a double view. 1. As it relates to the principles and temper of their minds. 2. To their practice and works.

§. 1. As it relates to their *principles* and temper of mind. This may be considered in two instances.

1. WHEN men are *indifferent* about the principles they embrace and entertain. There is a great deal of lukewarmness often seen in this case. For though men do not run into gross errors of mind and corruption of principle, which even *Laodicea* seems to have been free from; yet that is by chance or accident to them, not with judgment, or by choice. They take up with the principles of their education, or the prevailing vogue of the world, without ever examining the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of its divine authority. They either take it upon content, without any enquiry at all, or upon the credit and authority of others, and with an evident bias upon their minds. They are *Christians* upon no other grounds than other people are *Jews*, or *Pagans*, or *Mahometans*: They are *Protestants*, for the same reason that others are *Papists*; and of such a particular *denomination* among Protestants, that others are of other denominations; and so by just consequence, would have been of their faith, and of their religion,

religion, if they had been in their circumstances, that is, had been born in those countries, and had their education.

AND accordingly they have no zeal about their principles, no not about the plainest, the greatest, and most important truths of religion. I speak not now about matters of meer opinion, and *doubtful disputation*, in which sincere christians may differ from one another, and which have no influence and effect upon the heart or life, or tend to make them the better christians one way or other; in which case a greater degree of moderation and mutual forbearance is often desirable: But I speak of the great principles of the christian Religion, which are essential to it, and distinguish it from all other religions, and are designed to form the spirits and govern the lives of men, which is the true value of all religious principles; as the whole doctrine of the *new covenant*, and the *mediation* of Christ. They don't consider them as matters of moment, and worthy the most serious enquiry; and endeavour to satisfy themselves upon just grounds, and proper convictions of mind; or think it worth the while to *contend earnestly for the faith*, as it was *ONCE delivered to the saints*, and venture to offend others, or run any risk for the sake of them. Their principles hang loose about them, and are easily shook off or
laid

represented and reprov'd.

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laid aside: They have no fast hold of their minds, or interest in their hearts.

THEY are indifferent whether the great and unquestionable truths of the gospel revelation, are received or rejected by others; whether they are embraced and entertained, or betrayed and given up; whether they are mistaken and corrupted, or preserved pure and entire, as they lie in the Scriptures, without any mixture of falshood, or being perverted to a wrong meaning, not darkned and perplexed by terms of human art, or mixed with private opinion. Indeed, they can hardly be said to believe them themselves, but only profess to believe them.

2. WHEN they are *unaffected* with what they do believe. There is a dangerous lukewarmness in this respect. When men hold the christian principles, and really believe the doctrines of faith and worship, according to the scripture revelation, and upon the foot of their proper evidence; they are very sound and right in their faith, without infidelity or error; there lies no blame or charge upon their principles; which was the case here: but they are not duly impressed by them, or answerably affected and influenced. No, they are evidently careless and unconcerned about them, and don't duly attend to the true nature of their own principles,

principles, and the proper moment and importance of them. They seem to consider them only as *speculative* notions, and meer abstract truths. They think them true and not false, and yield their assent to them, and openly profess them; but they don't consider them as powerful and operative, as *practical* truths, and principles of action, which should raise suitable affections of soul, and come with proper weight and force; which should impress the heart, and influence their whole conduct. They are not *moved with fear* to avoid a threatned evil, and *persuaded by the terror of the Lord*; nor *led by the goodness of God to repentance*, or *constrained by love to obedience*: They are not animated or acted by the principles they embrace and profess, tho' the gospel, in the whole frame and true design of it, is a *doctrine according to godliness*; designed to promote a likeness to God in heart and life.

1 Tim. vi.
6.

THIS, I doubt, is a common case in the professing world: They *hold the truth* indeed, but they *hold it in unrighteousness*; with a neglect of duty, and disregard of God. They are *sound* in their principles, but *hereticks* in their lives, which is the worst and most dangerous heresy: Their principles are good, but they have no proper effect; and are only *notions*

in

in the mind, but not vital *principles*, or springs of holy action. They don't *minge* Heb. iv. 2. συγγεμειν *the word with faith*, or digest it in their minds, and draw forth the virtue of it by close attention and frequent and serious thought.

§. 2. As to their practice, or *works*. And lukewarmness lies chiefly in this, and is particularly referred to in the text. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.* And tho' there must be first a defect with respect to the principle, before there is of practice, for our works and actions will be as our principles are, wherever they are duly attended to; yet a lukewarm temper appears more visible in the practice, and is best judged of by it. I shall therefore consider this branch a little more distinctly, and illustrate it in some of the principal instances of it.

I. WHEN men take up with the outward *form* of religion, without attending to the inward *power* or the true design of it. They satisfy themselves with the meer outside of religion, with the body or carcass of it, without a living soul. This was the case here. The church of *Laodicea* was not stained with any foul error, or sunk into gross corruption, which some other of the churches of *Asia* are charged with. So the church of *Pargamus* had those who held the doctrine of Balam, and the doc-

Chap. ii. *trine of the Nicolaitans, which things,*
 14. 15. *saith he, I hate; i. e. doctrines of idola-*
 — iii. 1. *try and impurity. They had a name to*
live, as it is said of Sardis, and kept up
the outward profession and forms of true
religion, and the faith and worship of the
gospel; but they were greatly wanting as
to the inward life and power of it. Their
religion was very much formality, and con-
sisted in outward attendances, and the re-
gular performance of external duty, but
without a principle of spiritual life, or
the proper actings and exercises of it.

WE find that many at the last day will
 Mat. vii. 23. *say, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied*
in thy name — and yet did not the will of
his Father, but were workers of iniquity.
 They made a profession under prevailing dis-
 obedience and wickedness. So the Apostle
 2 Tim. iii. 5. *speaks of some who had the form of godli-*
ness, but denied the power of it: the outward
shew and appearance, without the inward
efficacy and virtue. So men often make an
open profession of religion, and perhaps a fair
and specious one, they attend upon all the
parts of outward worship, and abstain from
all the instances of gross and open vice, they
pretend to a visible relation to God, and
claim the privileges of a church state;
they are not quite cold or dead to reli-
gion; but neither are they hot: for either
they have no spiritual life, or at least no
 warmth

represented and reprov'd.

II

warmth and vigour of soul. They either don't act from life, or in a lively manner. And so their religion is not natural and easy to them, or performed with pleasure and delight, or any relish and taste; as what proceeds from nature and principle will be; but only a dull task, or formal round of external action. They rest in the outward form, and have not zeal enough to quicken and enliven it, or give any vigour to it, or sense of pleasure. Whereas Religion is an inward and spiritual thing, which is seated in the heart, and immediately respects God. 'Tis a *loving God with all the heart, and serving him with all the strength*, in our Lord's representation of it.

And the Apostle says, *The true circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.* And they who are of the *true circumcision, worship God in the spirit, and serve him with their spirit.* Rom. ii. 30.
Philip. viii.
3.

2. THEY are for *reconciling* their religion with their worldly interest, and joining both together. They would *serve God and Mammon too*. This was the case of this church. She had been in a state of outward prosperity, and abounded with all kind of good, as she fancied herself *rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing*, in the spiritual sense. She was, no doubt, for securing herself, and not running

any risk, or hazarding the loss of her ease and plenty. She was for making these two consist together, and not for parting with one for the sake of the other. There was plainly too great a prevalence of an *earthly mind*, or an addictedness to this world. They had not zeal to deny themselves, and forsake all, for the sake of Christ, and from a prospect of heaven.

AND this is a great instance of a lukewarm spirit in the christian church. Men are careful of their worldly interest in the first place, and make their religion yield and truckle to it. They will run no risk for the sake of it, or to the prejudice of their present interest. They are not for quitting religion indeed, or wholly giving it up, that would be to be quite *cold* to it; but then they are for reconciling and subduing it to the interests of the world, and for having both together at *any* rate. They are determined to secure the world, and for having no more religion than will stand with it.

THEY are like the *Israelites* in the time of *Ahab*, who *halted between two opinions, and were for serving God and Baal too*. And like *Naaman*, cured by the Prophet of his leprosy, who would henceforth offer *sacrifice to no God but to the Lord*; only he must be excused

1 Kings xviii. 21. *when he attended his master, his bowing*
 2 Kings v. 18. *in*

in the house of Rimmon. So the young man in the Gospel had *kept the commandments* from his youth, and enquired after eternal life; he appeared hopeful and promising, and recommended himself to the love and favour of Christ, by a discreet enquiry, and a regular life: but he would not part with the world for the sake of Christ, or lose all he had for a promise of a treasure in heaven. He had not zeal enough to deny his worldly interest and possessions, upon so direct a command, and so high a security. He left him at the turning point, and *went away sorrowful, having great possessions*. A lukewarm christian will not care to suffer any great inconvenience for his religion, or be easily brought to part with the world, or lay down his life at the call of God, and for the hopes of heaven. He will find some *saving* or other to his worldly interest, tho' at the expence of truth, or by compliance with sin, at least in a lesser or doubtful instance. ^{† John ii.} So the Apostle makes the *love of the world*, ^{15.} *i. e.* in a prevailing degree, inconsistent with the *love of the Father*; and the *friendship* ^{Jam. iv. 4.} *of the world, enmity with God*.

3. THEY are for *sparing* all the pains and *labour* in religion they can, and *excusing* themselves from the difficulties of it. They are for no more pains in religion than needs must, and the less with them
the

the better. So we may suppose the case of the church of *Laodicea*. She was not *cold*, or without any sense and regard to religion. Something was necessary to be done to keep up the form and profession of religion, and make a distinguishing appearance from some of the other churches. But neither was she *hot*, or shewed any diligence and zeal about it. They went on in a careless formality, and idle indifference. They did not stand still indeed, but they moved slowly and made little riddance: They were afraid of doing too much, and careful not to exceed.

LUKEWARMNESS is much seen in this instance, and commonly appears this way. Such men are for sparing and favouring themselves all they can, and doing no more than just needs must, and the necessity of the case requires. They must keep up the outward forms and observances of religion, that they may not seem to be quite cold and dead to it; but they care not how little they do in it, or how seldom it is done: They are great good husbands and very thrifty, on the wrong side. They are ready to say to themselves what *Peter* said to his Lord, *Spare thyself*; and to say of others zeal, what *Judas* said of *Mary*, *Wherefore is this waste?* They are ready to censure others diligence in religion as superfluous labour, and more ado than needs, or being *righteous over-much*. 'Tis

'Tis sufficient with them to go the beaten round and course of service, and perform the easier parts of religion, which can be done at a cheaper rate, and are consistent with their interest and their ease: but they are willing to be excused from the difficult duties, and giving themselves too much trouble about it. They go to church, and worship God in publick solemnities; perhaps they are just in their dealings with men, and keep themselves from open vice; and this is so far very right: but they care not how little they meddle with the vital and spiritual duties of religion; and what requires closer attention of mind, and greater diligence and self-denial; as purity of heart, spiritual worship, and a life of faith, the mortification of sin, especially of a favourite sin; watching over our hearts and ways; retired meditation upon the divine law, and examination of ourselves; and an heavenly mind and conversation. They have no notion of *doing whatsoever their hands find to do with all their might; of striving to enter in at the strait gate; or working out their salvation with fear and trembling; and giving diligence to make their calling and election sure, and to be found of their judge in peace:* To take all opportunities, and improve all advantages, to exert themselves to the utmost for further improvement,

ment, or greater usefulness, or better preparation for heaven. Hereupon,

4. THEY are content with as *little* religion as will just serve the *turn*. The church of *Laodicea* must be supposed to continue pretty much in the same state, and without any considerable alteration, when it was *neither cold nor hot*. They thought themselves safe and well already, and never aimed at higher attainments, or farther improvements in religion, as they did not much decline or grow worse; for then they would have ceased to have been *lukewarm*, and would have been either *cold* or *hot*.

So lukewarm christians look upon religion as a necessary means to happiness; they cannot attain their end without it. They must be religious in order to acceptance with God, and the obtaining of heaven at last; for *without faith it is impossible to please God*, and without *obedience* there is no salvation. And therefore they are not quite *cold* to it, or without any concern about it; they keep up the profession of faith, and the forms of worship, and have some regard to obedience: But then neither are they *hot*; they have no zeal about it, or ambition to excel in it. This appears in their being satisfied with just so much as they think absolutely necessary to their end. They are for so much religion as is sufficient to secure them the favour of
God,

God, and prevent his wrath, and no more; as if all beyond that were superfluous and needless. They care not how little they have, so they have but just enough, and use their religion only as a means to keep them out of hell, and just set them within the gates of heaven: They don't look upon it as most excellent and amiable in itself, and worthy their first choice, their highest love, and best indeavours.

THEY are content that others are *eminent* in goodness, and improved in religion: Let *them* have the glory of excelling, they are satisfied with the lowest form in the school of Christ, and the last place in the kingdom of heaven: They never aspire after farther increase of grace, or higher attainments in the christian life; to *grow in grace and knowledge*; to *add* one grace to another; to be of a *ready* and *forward* mind; to *abound in every good work*; and be *steadfast* and *established*; to reach to a closer conformity to God, to higher degrees of his favour, and greater rewards in heaven. They have a shameful modesty, and ill-placed humility, where only ambition is a virtue, and the greatest ambition is commendable. So they are but safe from danger, they care not how little holiness they have at present, or how little happiness hereafter: Tho' this by the way is contrary to the nature of true goodness, which always naturally tends

to farther growth, and aims at the highest perfection; and wherever religion is loved for itself, and has its proper power, it will necessarily be so.

5. THEY are *unconcerned* for the interest of religion in the *world*, and the good of *others*. So lukewarmness here stands opposed to being *zealous*, in *ver. 19.* or acting with fervour and vigour of mind. This is the natural consequence of a lukewarm indifference in religion. 'Tis always, observe it when you will, a narrow and selfish spirit. If they go on in the outward forms and duties of religion, and do enough, as they reckon, to secure the favour of God, and happiness hereafter; they are not solicitous what becomes of religion in the world, whether it flourish and prosper, or languish and decline; whether it get ground, and *mightily grow and prevail*; or lose ground, and is reduced within narrower limits; whether it is effectual and successful in the souls of men and *mighty through God*; or only a lifeless form and profession.

THEY are not much affected with the state of religion about them, or the fate of it in the world. They are not afflicted with the persecuted state of the church of God at any time, and grieved with the *afflictions of Joseph*; nor do they rejoice in the prosperity of it, and *prefer Jerusalem to their chief*

chief joy. They neither weep with them who weep, nor rejoice with them who rejoice. They are not duly affected with the dishonour, and contempt of religion in the world, or with the decays of goodness, and abounding of wickedness among professors of religion: They are not like just Lot in ² Pet. ii. 8. wicked Sodom, who dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds: Nor like the devout Psalmist, who ^{Psal. cxix.} beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; ^{158.} and says, Rivers of tears ran down my — ^{136.} eyes, because they keep not thy law. He was deeply affected at others wickedness: and how much reason have good men to be so in this degenerate world, wherever they live!

AND for the same reason they are not duly concerned to promote religion in others, and spread it round about them; in those who are under their care and within their reach. They are not like upright *Joshua*, determined for God and his service, they and theirs, whatsoever others do; according to that brave and generous resolution, *But as for me and my house we* ^{Josh. xxiv.} *will serve the Lord.* Or like the holy ^{15.} *Apostle*, whose heart's desire and prayer to ^{Rom. x. 5.} *God for Israel was, that they might be saved; and who tells the Philippians, God* ^{Philip. i. 8.} *is my record how greatly I long after you*

all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Indeed the Apostles acted with zeal to *save themselves and those who heard them*, and to promote the *common salvation*. But 'tis otherwise with the lukewarm: Let other men take care of themselves, and religion shift for itself, for them. They care not what becomes of the souls of other men, or of posterity and the rising generation, which is the seed and seminary of the church in after ages: If they can serve themselves of it, and secure their own ends by it, they are content; they have not zeal enough to draw forth their concern for others, or extend their regards to the world about them.

THIS complaint is as old as the Apostles time, and appeared in the first christian churches. The Apostle found it needful to exhort the *Philippians*, who are highly commended upon other accounts; *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*: Let every one be concerned for another's good; have a mutual regard to each other's welfare. They were in danger of seeking their own interest and credit in the use of their spiritual gifts, more than the edification of the church. He tells them he had only *Timothy* with him who was of a publick spirit: *I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state*; have an anxious solicitude and kindly concern, like

like that of a parent for his child. He adds, *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.* This was very general and prevailing in those parts where the Apostle now was, that is at *Rome*. Men were more concerned for their own safety in those troublesome times, than for the common interest, at least in comparison with *Timothy* and *Epaphroditus*, of whom he is here speaking. Hereupon,

6. THEY are backward in their *indeavours* to support and promote it. So it must needs be, where there is an indifference about it. A sincere and hearty friend of religion will think himself obliged to contribute all he can, every way, to the continuance and support of it in the world, and the spreading and increase of it every where; by his example and influence, by his countenance and assistance. Every man who has a zeal for God and religion will gladly do all he can to promote it, take every opportunity put into his hands, and make the best advantage of it he is able, to encourage the profession of religion, and furnish the proper means of it, and assist the endeavours of others, as well as use his own. This is the natural state of a warm and lively concern of mind.

BUT now on the other hand, a lukewarm temper is careless about it, and backward in its endeavours. Such men are brought
I
with

with difficulty and reluctance to join in a common cause, and bear their part to support it. They are for shifting it off from themselves, and don't think it concerns them : Let others take care of religion in the world, and the interests of other men ; 'tis enough for them to take care of themselves. They are ready to say, *Am I my brother's keeper ?* or chargeable with the care of other people, or answerable for their ignorance, or their neglects ? Perhaps they reckon it a busy officious forwardness, or vanity and ostentation, to shew a zeal about others welfare, or meddle with the concerns of religion in the world. They say, God will take care of his own interest, and others are fitter for it than they ; when indeed 'tis every man's duty to do his part, and every other man may make the same excuse. And so through their remissness and indifference, religion often lies neglected, and runs to ruin and decay in many places.

WHILE they are confined within the narrow circle of their own private interest, and swallowed up with the care of themselves, they neglect the interests of others, and are regardless of religion in the world. It may sink or swim for them, or any zeal they have for its support. They have neither a *forward*, or *liberal* mind, are neither *ready* or *bountiful*, to promote a common good, or assist the endeavours of others.

This

This is the reason of the backwardness of many to contribute to the support of the *Gospel* in the poorer places in the country, where multitudes would *perish for want of knowledge*, and the means of grace, if not assisted by the kindness and bounty of others; and to encourage the *Charity-schools* among us for the instruction of the poorer youth, which, whatever lesser inconvenience in some circumstances may be pretended, are surely, in their kind, an apt means to save them from the snares of ignorance, idleness and vice, and to season their minds betimes with a sense of religion, and fit them for usefulness in after life. 'Tis owing to this cause that many are wanting to assist the *Societies for Reformation of Manners*, in which many persons of great honour, and integrity, with wise measures, and great vigour, and good success, tho' with much trouble and at great expence, have been so long engaged; struggling and contending against a torrent of profaneness and wickedness, so hurtful to civil society; and attempting to prepare and dispose the minds of men to attend the worship of God, and receive the impressions of religion: An undertaking this, in which, I think, no good man who has any zeal for God, or love of his country, should be wanting to bear his part, according to his station and circumstance of life.

I know in all these cases there are *exceptions* raised, as men are skilful in starting difficulties to what they have no mind, and can easily find some faults where they desire to be excused: tho' that is not only *unkind*, but *unjust*; for 'tis not only denying our own help, but discouraging others, and tends to destroy the being of the thing. You will not help them yourselves, nor suffer others, by your good will, to do it neither. To deny or withdraw our help, is to weaken the design; but to cavil and wrangle against it, is, as far as lies in us, to stab it to the heart. But blessed be God there are many in this city, who are forward and generous in these respects, and great examples of zeal to others, sufficient to shame their indifference, and *provoke them to emulation*.

IF any are so curious here as to say, Which is the worst extreme and greater evil, an intemperate zeal, or lukewarmness and want of zeal? Indeed they are both very bad, and have either its peculiar evil belonging to it. The one is like a feverish *heat* in the body, which very much disorders the whole frame, and disturbs the regular actings of it; but the other is like an universal *weakness* and languor, or the *stupor* of a lethargy, which unfits and indisposes for any vigorous action at all. The one destroys the peace and prosperity of religion,

religion, in the world ; the other, the life of it. The former is more hurtful to other men, the latter is more dangerous to themselves.

I shall conclude this discourse with two practical remarks which the text it self suggests. The one is, That Christ *sees* a lukewarm spirit wherever it is : *I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot* ; so he speaks of all the other churches. He observes the temper of our minds, and the various workings of them, and knows what is good or bad. There is no hiding what is amiss from him whose *eyes are as* Rev. ii. 18. *a flame of fire*, and who *searches and tries* — 23. *the reins and the heart*. We may cover it from the eyes of men, and keep it a secret to ourselves, but he sees through all the disguise, and perfectly knows the thing as it is. No false colourings, or fair appearance can deceive him. All our indifference and neglects fall under his notice. And shall we not stand in awe of his eye, or venture to misbehave in his presence? Have we no reverence of his authority, or dread of his power? Nor is this simple knowledge, or meer speculative observation, and only for the sake of knowing it ; but 'tis to direct his carriage and conduct towards them, suitably to the state he finds them in ; for so it follows in v. 23. *And I will give to every one of you according to*

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his

Ch. xxii.
12.

his works. And he tells the whole church, *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.* He knows it, in order to adjust his present dispensations and final retributions. When he tells the lukewarm *Laodiceans*, *I know thy works*, surely 'tis with a design to strike an awe, and raise a concern of mind. *q. d.* 'Tis not unknown to me whatever you may think: I see the state and temper you are in, and will deal with you according to the coldness and indifference of your behaviour and conduct. The other remark is, That 'tis highly *displeasing* to him. He sees it with dislike and detestation wherever it is, and will shew his displeasure wherever it prevails. 'Tis threaten'd here with the greatest severity. But that leads me to the next branch of the subject.





REV. iii. 15, 16.

I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot : but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

I Considered in the former discourse, the *nature* of lukewarmness in religion, both with respect to the *principles* and temper of the mind, and the *works*, or actions of the life. I proceed now,

II. To represent the *evil* of it, and shew how great and hurtful an evil it is. This may be collected from the nature and circumstances of the Case.

I. 'Tis a great *absurdity*, and disagreeable to the nature of things. 'Tis plainly contrary to all the reason of the case. If men will be lukewarm and indifferent, it ought in reason to be about things which are in-

different in their own nature, and irrelative and unconcerning to their interests: They ought to be things of a lesser kind, which have a little value in themselves, and signify little to us. What has a lower place in the order of things, and don't affect our interest in any capital or considerable point, may be treated with answerable indifference, as matters of meer speculation, or doubtful opinion in religion, or external modes and circumstances, not determined either way by the word of God, in which some place a disproportioned zeal. Of this kind was the *keeping of days*, and *eating of meats*, among the Jewish converts, in the Apostles times, in which a great deal of zeal on one side, or the other, was ill placed; and a more indifferent mind, was more suitable and proper. In this case the Apostle directs, That every man acts according to his judgment or persuasion of mind, concerning the lawfulness and fitness of them. *One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man* *be fully persuaded in his own mind. He who regardeth a day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he who regardeth not a day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He who eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he who eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks: He owns God therein, and* notwithstanding

Rom. xiv.
15, 16.

notwithstanding that. And so in all the relations and affairs of humane life; in *marrying*, in *weeping* and *rejoicing*, in *buying*, ^{1 Cor. vii.} and *using* the world, we must be as *tho'* ^{29.} *we had and possessed them not*; and let our *moderation* be known to all, which ^{Philip. iv.} stands in opposition to *carefulness* about ^{5, 6.} them, or an anxious solicitude of mind.

BUT now in matters of *proper* religion, which are plainly and expressly required by God, and relate to our pleasing him, and acceptance with him at present, and our happiness with him hereafter; to be lukewarm here is quite another case, and altogether unnatural and absurd; because these are things of quite another nature, that is, of the greatest value in themselves, and the highest consequence to us. 'Tis to be careless where the greatest care is needful, and indifferent about what most of all concerns us. 'Tis alike unreasonable as if a man should be indifferent, whether he recovered, or died, in a fit of sickness; whether he prospered, or miscarried, in the main affair of life. And as these are things in all rational account of an higher nature, and greater importance to us, than any concerns of the bodily life and health; so the folly and absurdity must be proportionably greater than that of any other case whatsoever. Who sees not the glaring absurdity and impropriety, to be cold to our highest

highest interest, and lukewarm where we ought to be most zealous?

2. It commonly proceeds from *pride* and self-conceit. There is a great evil in the *cause* of it, as well as in its own *nature*. So it plainly was in the present case. *Thou sayest I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Here was a strange mistake of her own case; a vain conceit of excellence and fullness, when there was real emptiness and misery. They were puffed up with an opinion of their own worth, because they retained the outward forms of religion, and preserved the christian doctrine and worship uncorrupt among them, and made an open profession of it, without any remarkable error or disorder; though they were really formal and lifeless, and destitute of real goodness, or of any vigour and power of religion. They were really *wretched and miserable*, for they valued themselves upon a mistaken opinion of their case. If they had known themselves better, they would have thought worse of themselves, and a true judgement of things would have undeceived them.

THIS is a common case in the professing world. There is pride of external privilege, and of a formal religion, or fair out-

out-side, while they are careless of inward and vital religion, which is most *properly* religion. They fancy themselves virtuous and pious for keeping up the outward forms of religion, and external observances, perhaps in the strictest way, and with the least disorders, tho' they are regardless of the temper of their spirits, and the exercise of the christian graces. They are warm, it may be, about the modes and forms of religion, but comparatively cold about the life and spirit of it. They are filled with a proud conceit of their spiritual privileges, and appearance of things, without the substance and reality. There is a real ignorance of themselves, and the true state of the case, at the bottom of this conceit, and 'tis founded not upon the truth of things, but upon a real and dangerous mistake.

So I understand the Apostle when he tells the *Corinthians*, *Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: I would to God ye did reign, that we might reign with you.* He taxes their pride and conceit of their privileges and spiritual gifts, *q. d.* "You are full of yourselves, and think yourselves sufficient without my presence and help, who was the instrument of bringing you to the knowledge of the truth, and conveying your spiritual gifts. You are so many

1 Cor. iv. 8.

“many princes in your own conceit, and
 “are in your kingdom. I wish I may find
 “it so when I come among you, and may
 “share in your prosperity, and rejoice with
 “you.” This plainly imported a great
 unacquaintedness with themselves, and dis-
 regard of the means of improvement. Pride
 and conceit of knowledge and gifts often
 abates the life and zeal of religion, and
 naturally leads to security, and breeds a
 carelessness and indifference of mind.

3. THEY are always much *at a stand*,
 and incapable of any considerable improve-
 ment. For while they are *lukewarm and*
neither cold nor hot, they must be confi-
 ned within narrower limits, and be pretty
 much alike, without any considerable al-
 teration, from the necessary circumstance of
 their case. The reason is, That if they al-
 ter either way, it would change their whole
 state. If they were considerably better, then
 they would be hot; if they were worse,
 they would be quite cold. Any alteration
 of consequence would destroy their luke-
 warmth, and make them either hot or
 cold. 'Tis very observable concerning this
 church of *Laodicea*, that a lukewarm spi-
 rit had spread and prevailed to that de-
 gree, that none of them seemed exempt
 from it; for there is no one commendation
 of it, as there is of all the other churches.

They

They excelled in no one grace, or good work.

THE consequence of this is, That they must necessarily be supposed to be much at a stand, and without any considerable improvement, after the longest standing in the christian state, and the greatest advantages. 'Tis inconsistent with this temper of mind to *grow in grace*, or *abound in the fruits of righteousness*; to have a *strong faith*, or *fervent love*, or *lively hope*. Tho' they set under the gospel of grace, and enjoy the best means of improvement, for a long time together, they are just where they were, or as if they had less advantages, without making any advance or progress in the christian life, or reaching to higher attainments in it. All that ever can be pretended is, That they don't grow much worse, and are not quite cold; they are not dead, but only languid and weak; like a plant which does not die, but never thrives in a rich soil, and under the best culture.

BUT how does this answer the reason of the case, the long exercise of mercy and patience, the great enjoyment of means and opportunities, and the frequent calls and commands to grow and improve? How justly does this lay us open to the reproof of the Apostle, *Ye are dull of hearing*; Heb. v. 12. *for when for the time ye ought to be*
F *teachers,*

teachers, you need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. They are always
 Ver. 13, 14. *babes*, and never arrive at *full age*. They are *children*, and never come to proper manhood, or the *stature of a perfect man*.
 Eph. iv. 13. This is to be *dwarfs* in religion, and stunted in our growth, under all the means of nourishment and strength.

4. IT betrays to *apostacy* in times of trial. Perseverance to the end, is essential in the christian state, and indispensably necessary to the final blessedness. We must
 Mat. x. 22. *endure to the end*, that we may be *saved*;
 Heb. x. 39. and to *draw back*, is *unto perdition*. Now this requires the truth and reality of things, and not only outward forms and appearance. There must be a high value and regard to religion, and some degrees of warmth and zeal; we ought to be well satisfied, and well fixed in our minds, to stand the shock of persecution, and endure the fiery trial. It requires considerable strength to bear up against a warm opposition: We had need have courage and resolution to stand against a stream, and face a danger, to *deny ourselves, and take up the cross*.

BUT a lukewarm christian will never be able to do this. He will yield to a powerful assault, and consult his safety by a timely retreat. He will throw down his arms
 at

at the sight of an enemy, and cry quarter at the first violent attack. He may make a fair appearance in a time of prosperity and peace, and when all is safe about him; but when *persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended*. He will throw all over board, when the storm begins to arise, and *make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*. How shall he stand his ground in a time of trial, who has no life and zeal in the cause in which he is engaged; no heart or courage to resist or contend?

AND so we commonly find it in times of publick danger and great distress. Formal professors of religion fall away and drop off, like withered leaves, or rotten fruit, in a high wind, or at the shaking of a tree. A lukewarm christian will never die a *martyr* for his religion, or lay down his life for Christ. He will be more likely at such a time to *betray* his Lord, like *Judas*, for the sake of gain; or, with *Demas*, to *for-sake* his profession, from the *love of the present world*. He will never run a risk, or endure a hardship, for what he is indifferent about. Lukewarmness will certainly lead to sinful compliance to secure themselves, or to downright apostacy, in extreme danger, if ever it comes to the trial.

5. 'Tis highly *offensive* to God. This is represented here by the image and allu-

sion of *warm water*, which is offensive to the stomach, and provokes a nausea; *q. d.* The thing is grievous to me, and what I cannot digest. It plainly imports something highly disagreeable and displeasing to him. It cannot but be a great offence to the blessed God, to see a reasonable soul act so contrary to the highest reason, and so strangely weak and absurd a part; to be indifferent and unconcerned about the greatest good; to be careless about acceptance and favour with God, and its own welfare and happiness. Why, to see men zealous about trifles, and indifferent about the most real and important blessings; careful of their bodily welfare, and the concerns of the present life, but negligent of their souls prosperity, and everlasting blessedness; to value themselves upon outward privileges and forms, which are only valuable as *means* of improvement, but cold and careless about the inward life of religion, the due impression upon the heart, the forming the spirit aright, and the exercise and growth of their graces; what can be more disagreeable and unaccountable?

THIS is plainly trifling with God in the most serious matter, and putting the greatest affront upon him. 'Tis an affront to his *holiness* and *truth*, as if he did not love or require *truth in the inward parts*,
worship

worship *in spirit and truth*, and love and obedience *with all the heart*. 'Tis an affront to the zeal of the Lord of hosts, and his *jealousy* of his glory, as if he were indifferent too, and *altogether such a one* Psal. l. 21. *as ourselves*, and might be put off with shews and shadows, and the meanest offering were a sufficient sacrifice to the *Majesty* of heaven. 'Tis an affront to his *omniscience*, as if he did not know the heart, and might be easily deceived and *mocked*; and to his infinite *goodness*, from which we receive all our powers and all our blessings, as if he deserved no better at our hands. But what do men mean to *provoke the Lord to jealousy*, are we stronger than he? Will they offend him not only by their sins, but by their religion too, which is designed to please him, and procure his favour? Is not the *deceiver* cursed who offers to the Lord a *corrupt thing*, and pre-Mal. i. 8, sents him who is a *great king*, with what ¹⁴ an earthly *governour* would reject and despise? Hereupon again, and in consequence of this,

6. It tends to *destruction*, and is the ruin of churches, and particular persons, wherever it prevails. For this the expression imports too, and is agreeable to the allusion here: Because thou art *neither cold nor hot*, *I will spue thee out of my mouth*; like lukewarm water, which is uneasy to the

the stomach, and provokes a discharge. The expression plainly signifies, not only the offensive nature of the evil, but the destructive tendency of it too, and what it must naturally issue in at last. *q. d.* "Because of thy lukewarmness, I will utterly disown thee, and cast thee off. I will unchurch thee, and give thee up to desolation; I will cut off the relation between us, and remove the symbols of my presence from among you; I will have nothing more to do with you in a way of favour, but will cast you off with disdain, as a thing dishonourable and displeasing to me."

So the general prevalence of a lukewarm spirit in any *church*, threatens the dissolution and destruction of it; and according to the degrees and continuance of it, is a fatal symptom of God's withdrawing from them his gracious presence and protection, and giving them up to gross corruptions which destroy the spiritual nature of religion, or to violent persecutions, which destroy the outward profession of it. When a careless indifference has long prevailed among all sorts, he commonly *removes the candlestick out of its place*, and takes away the *word of the kingdom*, the token and pledge of his presence, and carries it to another place; which was actually verified in the churches of *Asia*, which have been all long ago

ago destroyed, and over-run with *Mahometanism*. So God threatned *Israel* by the prophet, *Ye are not my people, and I am* Hof. i. 9. *not your God*; and he utterly destroyed the *Jewish* church, when it was sunk into formality and hypocrisy. What aspect this has upon the present state of the christian church, they who wisely consider things, and have a due concern of mind for the interest of religion among us, cannot but think of with trembling and fear.

AND the tendency of a lukewarm temper is the same in proportion to *particular* persons. When they continue long *neither cold nor hot*, under great spiritual advantages of improvement, he leaves them at length to grow quite cold, and to extinguish every degree of heat. It provokes the holy and jealous God to *take away his holy spirit from them*; to leave them to themselves, and to grow into greater carelessness and security, or to run into open wickedness and disregard of God. And I heartily wish there were not many instances to be found in christian churches of this kind, not only in former times, and in other parts of the world, but in the present age and among ourselves. Upon the whole, how great an evil must that needs be, which has not only so much evil in its nature and cause, but such sad effects too; and which naturally

naturally tends to so much evil, and issues in so great a mischief at last ! I proceed,

III. To apply it. And here,

§. 1. LET me put you upon the *tryal* of your own state : Look upon yourselves in the light of this truth. Are you *lukewarm, neither cold nor hot* ? The matter is very serious and of great moment, which concerns every one of us, and affects us very nearly. I shall endeavour to speak to the conviction of conscience, and to bring it home to every man's case. If you heartily join issue with me in a serious attention and regard, we may hope for a good effect. I shall be free and faithful with you in it.

1. Is your concern and zeal at all equal or suitable to the *importance* of things ; does it bear any proportion to the real value and moment of them ? You are supposed here not to be quite cold, or without any zeal for religion : but is there any degree of heat suitable to the greatness of the objects you are concerned about ? Is your zeal for *God*, for his interest and honour in the world, for his truth and appointments, at all answerable to the greatness of the things, or the greatness of your concernment with them ? Does it at all agree to the value of his favour and accep-
tance

tance of you, and your happiness in him? Is your zeal for your *soul*, and your eternal welfare, in any proportion to the worth of the soul, and its distinguishing excellence and pre-eminence above the body, and all its present concerns? Is your regard to your future existence, agreeable to the awful importance of eternity? Is your concern for the good of the *world* about you, and the care of every one under your roof, and within the compass of your influence, suitable to the relation you stand in to them, and your capacity of service to them? Is your regard for the welfare of the *church* of God, for its peace and prosperity, free from corruption and persecution, and its greater glory and extent, becoming a citizen of *Sion*, and a member of the body of Christ? Are your daily prayers and endeavours worthy of the christian zeal, and suitable to the consequence of things?

MAY not all our warmth and zeal about these things be called lukewarm, with respect to the real excellence and importance of them? Don't it fall vastly short of what it ought to be, and what it might be, with due care and regard to them? Herein, I doubt, we shall all be found wanting and blameable. There are degrees of lukewarmness, or a disproportionate zeal, in those who are truly sincere, and most zealous; enough to humble us before God, and shame, and condemn us

in our own minds. This extends wide, and affects us all.

2. Is it equal to what it *formerly* was? Is there no abatement or decay of the zeal we once had? We find this charged upon the church of *Ephesus*, which yet, in the main, was greatly approved and commended; *Nevertheless I have something against thee, because thou hast left thy first love; remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works.* Their love to God and one another was sensibly abated, and as *iniquity abounded*, the *love of many waxed cold*. May not God justly expostulate with us, as he did with *Israel*? *I remember the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown*: When they first became his people, and entered into covenant with him. *What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me?* What falshood, what injury, what unkindness? May he not reproach us as he does them in another prophet; *Your goodness is as the morning cloud and early dew which goeth away*; which is scattered and dried up every day by the rising sun.

Is there no sensible alteration from your former state? Perhaps when you first set out in religion, your minds were possessed with

with a greater reverence of the majesty of God, and concern for his favour ; you had warmer desires after him, and greater diligence and delight in his service ; a greater fear of offending him, and tenderness of his honour. But now you are more cold and indifferent towards him, have greater remissness of mind, and less regard to him in your lives. You once *loved the habitation of his house*, and *a day in his courts was better than a thousand* ; you rejoiced when they said, *let us go to the house of the Lord*, and *the sabbath of the Lord was your delight* ; you found refreshment and strength in the worship and ordinances of God, and *went from strength to strength*. But now you are less zealous in attending them, and more easily dispense with the neglect of them ; a slighter occasion will divert from a solemn attendance, and excuse a disregard. 'Tis more a matter of curiosity and entertainment ; perhaps 'tis a *weariness*, or a meer formality. Have you the same relish for *retired converse with God* ; for secret prayer and meditation ; for self-converse and *communing with your own heart* ; have you the same serious concern ; the same lively affection, unless abated by age, and bodily infirmity, in which case, indeed, there is great compassion and allowance due ? Or is there a greater listlessness and backwardness to

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them,

them, more uncertain attendance to them, and less satisfaction and pleasure in them? Is there the same concern there formerly was to secure the presence of God with you in all the important turns and transactions of life, and to seek his direction and favour in any *undertaking*; as in the change of our abodes, or in any new relation or business of life, or any remarkable sickness or success? Or is there evidently a less regard to God in the affairs of life? Don't you rather leave them to the care of providence, and your own industry and skill, and expect his blessing and direction of course, without an *explicite* acknowledgment of God, or being so earnestly concerned about it? Have you the same regard you ever had for the publick good, and the welfare of others; or are you not more contracted in your minds, and more indifferent towards it?

ARE we sensible of no abatement of former zeal, or greater degree of coldness and indifference? And then what will all the increase of our light signify, or the improvement of our knowledge; if there is not an answerable degree of heat and warmth of mind, and a greater regard to God in all our ways? Or, if we are drawn off by the eager pursuit of knowledge, or the surprize of further light, and much more by angry and uncharitable contention

tention about it, from attending to the practical consequence, and proper effect of it? It will be very unedifying, if it is only a cold unaffecting light. God be merciful to the improved and enlightned part of the world, who speak more correctly, and think and reason with greater exactness than former ages, but live more carelessly and are less *circumspect* in their walk. They are better *Philosophers* indeed, but not so good *Christians*; which if my observations of the world don't deceive me, is too often the case. And tho' I readily own that this is not the natural effect of greater light, or any just prejudice to sober enquiries; yet, surely, 'tis the more criminal, upon that account, and worthy of the greater blame.

§ 3. CONSIDER it in comparison with other's *greater* zeal. Is your zeal equal to that of some other christians? Have not some of them a higher reverence of God in their minds; a greater zeal for his honour and interest; a greater delight in his service; a more generous concern for the good of others, to promote christian knowledge, true piety, and universal benevolence in the world? Don't some others, of no greater capacity and advantages than your selves, perhaps some of much less of either, far outstrip and exceed you in spiritual attainments and usefulness of life.

Some

Some plain christians in meaner circumstances of life, who have less time and fewer helps, and, it may be, less degrees of knowledge and accomplishment; have yet greater life and zeal in their souls, are more deeply concerned, more diligent and industrious in religion, and with all their disadvantages, better christians than you.

AND what is this owing to, but a lukewarm indifference of mind; a less value and regard to spiritual things, and a greater neglect of capacity and opportunities? Why should not you be as lively and zealous as any others, with the same capacities and help, much more with greater? How sensibly may we often discern our own defects in other christians greater improvements, as there was a great and evident difference here between the church of *Laodicea*, and that of *Ephesus* and *Philadelphia*!

4. CONSIDER it in respect to your *own* zeal for other things. Some men have a greater zeal for the *externals* and circumstantials of religion, than for the inward and vital parts of it. They have more zeal for their own peculiar modes of worship, and their distinguishing opinions, by which they differ from other christians, than for the substantial duties of religion, and the great principles in which they all agree; as if a man should be more concerned for the complexion and features of his face, than

than the sound temperament of the blood and spirits. They are more careful to make a profelyte to their own party and their own way, than to make him truly good, and universally holy. They have a warmth, it may be, an intemperate one, for an outward form, or difficult Speculation, but they are cold to the love of God, and the love of man for his sake. They are zealous in matters of worship and opinion, but sadly careless in matters of practice, and daily duties towards men. They abound and exceed in their care of lesser things, but are greatly defective in their regard to the greatest. So the *Pharisees compassed sea and land to make a profelyte; and tithed mint, anise and cummin,* but neglected the *weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith.* Is your zeal to please God and do his will, as great as your zeal for any distinguishing rite, or any favourite opinion?

AGAIN, Others have a great zeal for the interests of this *world*; for their bodily welfare, and the success of their affairs. Here they are careful out of measure; they are anxious in their minds, and diligent in their indeavours; they are constant and unwearyed in contriving and promoting their present interest; they *rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness:* They may be truly said to *mind earthly things;*

things; their heart is in them, and they are in good earnest. They lose no opportunity, and neglect no advantage. But are they so in religion? By no means, nothing like it. Here they are strangely cold and careless; they satisfy themselves with outward appearances, and a lifeless formality. There is an evident disproportion at first sight, and the greater, the nearer you look into it. They have not the same concern of mind, nor use the same diligence to please God and save their souls, as they do to grow rich and get the world. They are more careful a great deal to increase and secure their present perishing Possessions, than to *lay up a treasure in heaven*, and secure the *true riches*, and an *incorruptible inheritance*. Is not this evident every where in fact? And does not this plainly shew a want of zeal, and a great degree of lukewarmness, wherever it is?

§. 2. LET me *caution* you against this great and dangerous evil which began so early, and so often prevails in the christian church. Whether there is any present occasion for this as things now stand in the christian world, and as they lie among ourselves, I am content any man should judge, who is seriously concerned for the interest of religion, and is not to a great degree lukewarm himself.

If

If you say, But what must we do to prevent, or recover ourselves from such a state? I answer briefly in the following suggestions, which the context here will furnish us with.

Possess your minds with the *value* and moment of things. How great are the concernments of religion to every man? Of what consequence is the favour of *God*, and acceptance with him through Christ, of an interest in the gospel-covenant, and a title to eternal life? Of what value are your *souls*, which in the accounts of the Saviour of the world, are *more worth than the whole world*? How great a thing is the *eternal salvation* of the soul? How excellent and amiable is the *worship* and service of God, and the several *graces* of the christian life, which are the wisely appointed means, and necessary qualifications to acceptance and happiness? How infinitely more noble and important are the *unseen eternal things* of the other world, than all the *seen and temporary* things of this? Is there any degree of comparison and proportion between the *momentary* things of the present life, and the *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*? Settle your judgments of the real value of things, and what is unquestionably right and fit, that you may proportion your regards to the truth of things, and bring them

to a nearer equality to them. Where shall we be zealous if we are lukewarm here? What else in all the world deserves our care so much?

BEWARE of the first *beginnings* of lukewarmness, and recover yourselves by timely care. So Christ directs the church
 Ch. iii. 2. of *Sardis, Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain.* Carefully watch your own spirits, and whatsoever may give a wrong turn to them. Observe the first tendency to decay, the early abatements of your love, and remissness of diligence and care. Often call yourselves to an account: Enquire what occasioned the first declining from God, and where you first diverted from the right way. Observe the several steps of this retrograde motion, and degrees of your wandering from God. Take the matter in time, before it grow quite cold, and all degrees of warmth are lost. Things will run to greater lengths of weakness and disorder, by neglect. Make a speedy stop when once you discover you are gone back, or stepped out of the way. You will more easily recover yourselves by timely application, as 'tis easier to rectify a slight disorder than to remove a rooted distemper. So he directs the church of
 Ch. ii. 5. *Ephesus; Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent: i. e. recover thyself by repentance, and remember in order to*

represented and reprov'd.

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to repent. *q. d.* A little self-reflection will help to bring you to yourselves.

BESIDE, strengthen your *zeal*, which is directly opposite to lukewarmness, and the greatest preservative from it. So he directs this church of *Laodicea*, *Be zealous* Ver. 19. *therefore and repent.* Keep alive your zeal as the most effectual guard and security. Revive the impressions of divine things when they begin to languish and abate, and keep up the favour and influence of them upon your minds. Let them always appear great and important, that they may come with weight and force, and the concern of your minds be in some measure answerable to the real moment of things. And the more your zeal is strengthened and enlivened, the less danger you will be in of a lukewarm spirit, and the more effectually recovered from it.

To conclude, Look to *Christ* for counsel and supplies. So he directs all the churches in the close of every Epistle: *Let him who hath an ear, hear what the spirit saith unto the churches*; i. e. attend with care to the counsels and instructions I give them. And particularly to this church, and in its present state, he says; *I counsel* Ver. 18. *thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayst be rich, and white rayment that thou mayst be clothed, and the shame*

of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see. This was a proper prescription to

her miserable case, who was *poor* and *blind* and *naked*. *q. d.* "Use sincere indeavours

"and appointed means, look to me by

"earnest prayer for a sound faith, which

1 Pet. i. 7. "is like *tried gold*, and the true *riches*

Jam. ii. 5. "of the soul; and for real holiness and

"sanctification, which is the fruit of faith,

"and the proper clothing and ornament

"of it; and for knowledge and wis-

"dom to make thee sensible of thy true

"state, and direct thee in the way of thy

"duty." Let us take this counsel and

look to Christ the fountain of all grace, by

proper application and attendance, for

fresh recruits of spiritual vigour, and greater

degrees of it; to excite the dying sparks

of decayed zeal, and blow them up into a

kindly flame. This must be our last resort,

and constant care, as it will be the most ef-

fectual means, and will render all the rest

effectual too.





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APPENDIX

CONCERNING

FALSE ZEAL.



IRTUE, like truth, is a strait line between two extremes: Every one of the former lies in the middle between two opposite vices, as the other does between two errors. He who effectually guards against both extremes, naturally falls into the sacred mean*. Thus in the instance before us, *Zeal*, or a fervour of mind in what is good, is a christian grace or virtue†; the extreme

* Virtus est vitium fugere, & sapientia prima,
Stultitia caruisse ————— Hor. l. i. Ep. 1.

Virtus est *medium* vitiorum & utrinq; reductum. Ep. 18.

Est *modus* in rebus, sunt certi deniq; fines,

Quos ultra citraq; nequit consistere rectum. Sat. l. i. S. i.

† The *nature* of zeal as a christian grace has been considered to great advantage in Mr. *John Reynolds's* Treatise, intitled,

treme on the one hand, is *lukewarmness*, or want of zeal; the extreme on the other hand, is too much zeal, or a *false* and wrong zeal. And accordingly having considered, in the former discourse, the extreme in the *defect*, I propose to consider briefly the other extreme, that in the *excess*; which I call in the general a *false* or wrong zeal. And because this is a point of consequence in the present subject, and of great use in life, I shall, 1. State and describe it. 2. Represent the evil of it.

I. To state and *describe* it. 'Tis necessary, in the first place, to know what it is, and how 'tis distinguished and circumscribed, before we can judge of the evil of it, or be careful to guard against it. Now a wrong zeal may be considered either as placed upon an improper and insufficient *object*, and then 'tis a *mistaken* zeal; or in an undue *degree* towards an, otherwise, proper object; and then 'tis an *intemperate* zeal. I shall briefly represent it both ways.

§. 1. When it is placed upon an improper *object*, and is a *mistaken* zeal. This is often the case in fact; men are zealous in the wrong place, where they ought to be

intituled, *Zeal a virtue*: in Dr. Evans's *christian temper*, Vol. II. Sermon. 18: Dr. Clarke's Sermons, Vol. IV. sermon. 17. and in Mr. George Smith's Sermon, at the Old-jewry, of the Regulation of religious zeal.

be cool, and ought not to be zealous. Thro' prejudice or neglect, for want of attention, or by the violence of passion, they mistake the proper object of it, which makes an essential difference in the quality of moral actions. This is evident in these two great instances, either when they are zealous for what is directly *evil*, or for comparatively *little things*. When they are zealous for what is *evil*, they change the whole object of true zeal, which is always something which is *good*. They invert the order of things, and instead of being zealous in a *good thing*, they are zealous in what is *wicked*, and spend the fervour of their minds upon that which is the proper object of hatred and aversion. This is represented by the Prophet in strong expressions: *Woe unto them who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope*; i. e. with great pains and labour, who are artful and industrious in excusing and confirming themselves and others in their evil practices. And again, *Woe to them who are strong to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong wine*. Thus when men are zealous in dishonouring God, or injuring other men; in promoting profaneness and neglect of God, and disregard and contempt of his service; or in drawing men into sin by the force of example, or solicitation, or the lure of advantage

Mat. xxiii.
13.

vantage and pleasure; by sinful sports and pastimes, which not only waste a great deal of precious time, but corrupt the minds and manners of men, especially of younger persons: Or when they are zealous against others *goodness*, and endeavour to hinder them from the worship and service of God, or hurt them for doing their duty, and following the best light of their own minds. So the unbelieving *Jews* were earnestly set upon hindering men from believing the gospel, and entering into the *kingdom of heaven*, or the gospel state, when it was first set on foot in the world, by the personal ministry of Christ: *Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, nor suffer them who are entering, to go in.* They did all they could by reproaches and threatnings, by falshood and power, to prejudice and discourage the well disposed from embracing the christian doctrine. So both *Jews* and *Gentiles* afterwards opposed the Apostles of Christ, and prejudiced the people against them, contradicting their doctrine, disparaging their character and conduct, and using all the methods of slander and violence. These men act with fervour in an ill cause, and to serve a wicked purpose, to do mischief, and promote the kingdom of the devil in the world.

OR

OR else when our zeal is placed upon *little things*. This affects another circumstance of the case ; for the proper object of our zeal is not only something which is *good*, but which is *considerable*. We must not be zealous about *a trifle*, or things of a doubtful nature, and smaller consequence, which don't affect the vitals of religion, or tend to make us better men in heart or life. As now for example ; a zeal for expressions and *phrases* in religion which are not scriptural, and laying a stress upon a particular form of words, and manner of expression, which has no higher original than human authority and prevailing custom. And tho' a wise man would not scruple any expressions which are at all apt and fit to convey a right sense of things, or which may obviate the prejudice of other men, and dispose them to receive the truth ; yet neither would he lay a weight upon 'em, or make them the test of soundness to other men ; as if the truth might not be as well exprest by other words, and best of all by those of the scripture, that *form of sound* ^{2 Tim. i.} *words*, and the *words which the Holy* ^{13.} *Ghost teacheth* ; who doubtless could best ^{1 Cor. ii.} ^{13.} clothe his own conceptions with proper and precise terms, and the fittest to convey his meaning. And tho' even these may need to be explained and *expounded more perfectly* to the understandings of the ignorant

and weak, and may be represented and illustrated to great advantage to instruct and impress the minds of the more improved; yet surely they can be as easily explained as any human words, and understood with greater certainty and safety; and are more fit to be made the *Standard* of truth, than any other whatsoever.

So a zeal for particular *opinions*, or favourite notions which distinguish one party of christians from another; in which wise and good men have different apprehensions, and from a different turn of mind and degrees of light, perhaps cannot possibly agree; when the great things of religion are more clear and certain, in which the sober and the pious of all parties, cannot but agree. And tho' every man ought to be determined in lesser things by his own conviction and best light, when he is obliged to chuse his way, and prefer one to another; yet they are improper objects of a great deal of zeal, and sobriety and moderation are proper in that case. In things of this nature the rule

Rom. xiv. of scripture is, *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*; and *Let your moderation be known to all men*; i. e. candour and equity.

5.
Philip. iv.
5.

OR yet again, when we are zealous for the outward *forms* of religion, and meer external rites and observances, especially which are only of human appointment and authority.

authority. A mighty zeal and warmth for, or against a particular mode and manner of worship, or a meer circumstance or appendage of religion, is misplaced and improper. So the Apostle says of the Jews who believed, *They are all zealous of the law*; Acts xxi. of the rites and observances of the law of ^{20.} Moses, notwithstanding they embraced the christian doctrine. And he says of himself before his conversion to Christianity; *Being more exceeding zealous of the traditions of my Fathers*; i. e. of human opinions and appointments, and not the commands of God: And he was more zealous about them than ordinary, and more than other men. Thus far it may be reckoned a *mistaken zeal*, or misplaced, and upon improper objects.

§ 2. WHEN there is an *undue degree* of it, upon, otherwise, proper objects; and then 'tis strictly an *intemperate zeal*. It may exceed in the degree, as well as err in the object. And this may be especially in two great instances, either when 'tis *disproportionate* to the value of its object, or is *inconsistent* with some other grace, or virtue: When we have more zeal than the nature of the thing requires, or our zeal for it destroys some other duty of the christian life.

'Tis *disproportionate* to the value of its object when we have more zeal than

Of FALSE ZEAL.

agrees to the nature of the thing we are zealous about, and lay a greater weight upon it than is warranted by the word of God. Suppose any lesser truth or duty of religion, a doubtful opinion, or less command, in distinction from the *first principles of the doctrine of Christ*, or the *weightier matters of the divine law*; which yet may be of divine appointment too, and which *ought to be done*, and ought not to be neglected. There must not, for example, be as great zeal for the circumstantial of religion, as for the substance of it; for the ornament, as for the life; for matters of decency and convenience, as for spiritual edification; for the instrumental means, as for the great end of it, to which they are all directed, and in which their value truly lies. This was the great fault the Apostle found in the

Rom. x. 2. *Jewish* zealots; *I bear them record they have a zeal of God*; in things which relate to God, and for his law and worship; and so far it was right: *But not according to knowledge*; i. e. with judgment and discretion: It did not proceed from wisdom and reason, informed and directed by the word of God; and was not according to the different nature of the object, and in proportion to its worth and excellence. It was not according to the truth of things, and the reason of the case. They laid a greater stress

stress upon *Jewish* rites and observances, than the nature of the things required, and when the obligation to them ceased : This was the case here.

So tho' we must be zealous in every *good thing*; yet not *alike* zealous, but only according to the *degree* of its goodness. We must have a greater zeal for a greater and more important good, and a less, where the good is less, and of a lower degree. We must distinguish things according to their respective value and use; and separate and make a difference, according to the real difference in the nature of things. We must not take things in the lump, and confound and blend them together, which are really different, and should be considered as distinct. This the Apostle calls *approving the things which are more excellent*, or trying things which differ. The reason is, That this would disturb the order of nature, and introduce a great irregularity into the moral world. Tho' the thing is good, and a proper object of zeal, yet not of that *degree* of zeal, not of the *same* zeal, with other things, which are of a nobler nature and higher value.

Rom. ii.

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Philip. i.

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αφ' εσντα.

BESIDE, It is an intemperate zeal when it becomes *inconsistent* with some other grace and virtue, or destroys some other duty of the christian life. Religion is a beautiful *frame* of truth, and of a regular order

order in all its parts, which reflects a glory upon the whole, and yields stability and strength. Every thing, which dislocates any of its parts, and disturbs the order of it, does so far sully its glory and weaken its strength; like putting any part of a regular building out of its proper place. Indeed the great mischief to religion all along has been, not only in not distinguishing things which really differ; but in running away with some or other part of it, and separating what ought to be conjoined, and always taken together. Thus all that zeal is evil, whatsoever is the object of it, and tho' 'tis never so good, which is inconsistent with any other grace, or carries us beyond the bounds of duty in any other respect. For example, when it is without charity and with bitterness and wrath. When our zeal for God devours our love and good-will to men, and extinguishes all tender sentiments and affection to our fellow-christians. When the flame of zeal which should only warm and heighten our love, consumes and eats it up; and only fires the mind with envy and wrath, and leads us to hurt and injure others. All uncharitable and persecuting zeal, wherever it is, which puts us upon censuring and reproaching, or offering violence and wrong to others, only because they differ from us, whatsoever the difference may be,

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is a blind and furious zeal, and runs into great intemperance and excess; and commonly the more blind the more furious.

So the Apostle says of himself when he was a Jew, *Concerning zeal persecuting the church; and beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it.* Philip. iii. 6. Gal. i. 13.

He persecuted the christians who embraced the truth of the gospel, from a false zeal for the traditions of the Fathers; and no doubt thought ill of them, and reproached and treated them as ill men, who opposed the truth, and disturbed the publick peace.

So he says, *I was a blasphemer, and persecutor, and injurious; but I did it ignorantly and in unbelief.* 1 Tim. i. 13. And the Jews

persecuted the Apostles from the same principle: *They were filled with zeal, and laid their hands on the Apostles, and put them in the common prison.* And again, *When the Jews saw the multitude, who attended the Apostles preaching; they were filled with zeal, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul.* Acts v. 17. Ch. xiii. 4.

And at Thessalonica, the Jews who believed not, moved with zeal, took unto them certain lewd fellows, and made an uproar; set the mob upon them; and said, *they who have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.* Ch. xvii. 5. Ver. 6. And he was accused in form by Tertullus before the Roman governour, as a mover of sedition, C. xxiv. 14.

tion, and ringleader of a sect, only because he worshipped the God of his Fathers, after the way they called heresy. The Apostle James represents this case : But

Ch. iii. 14. if you have bitter envyings, *ἔνλον πικρόν*, bitter zeal, glory not, and lye not against the truth ; i. e. a fierce contentious zeal which sharpens and imbitters the spirits of men against one another. Whensoever our zeal transports to intemperate passion, leads to wrath and violence, or any unchristian methods, to promote and propagate truth or goodness, in whatsoever instance ; it ceases to be a christian virtue, and degenerates into a dangerous vice. 'Tis not christian zeal, but human fury, or that wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God. Our zeal against the errors or sins of others, must not make us hate or hurt their persons, and destroy compassion and kindness ; but must stand with good-will towards them, and a sincere desire of their good. It must consist, in all the instances and exercise of it, with all the other graces of the christian life, and not interfere, much less swallow up any one of them. The reason is, That they are equally christian duties, and enjoined by the same authority and law of God. He who requires us to be zealous, does also require us to love our brethren, and that much more frequently, and with the greatest earnestness,

nestness, and the strongest motives. We must *love one another with a pure heart fervently*; as well as *contend earnestly for the faith*. Having thus far described the nature of false zeal, I proceed now,

II. To represent the *evil* of it, and shew how wrong and hurtful a thing it is. And,

I. 'Tis *unreasonable*, and disagreeable to the nature of things: For 'tis shewing a great regard for improper and inconsiderable things, or a disproportionate, and inconsistent regard, for things which are proper and considerable. And that is plainly unnatural, and contrary to the reason of things. There ought in reason to be a proportion observed, and an answerableness between the concern of our minds, and the nature of things. The zeal or fervour of our minds should certainly have a proper object, or something worthy of so great a regard. But to be zealous about what is either *evil* or *inconsiderable*, or with an undue and irregular zeal about what is truly good, is evidently misplacing our concern; 'tis overdoing and acting quite out of nature, and without any proportion. And so 'tis plainly opposed to true *wisdom*, which always lies in suiting and accommodating things to one another, and observing a due measure. 'Tis therefore acting disagreeably to all the rules of reason and wisdom, and observing no

order and proportion of acting; and would in all other cases be esteemed weakness and folly, or acting unworthy a wise and reasonable being. How great an impropriety is it in reasoning as well as action, for a reasonable intelligent soul, distinguished from other beings by so noble a capacity, to act in the greatest concern of life, not only without reason, but in plain contradiction to it; to throw away the zeal of their minds at random; to waste the fervour and vigour of their spirits upon things unworthy and unsuitable. What a mighty disorder does this necessarily introduce into a reasonable nature? And tho' this may be thought the least thing which can be said of it, it is of the first consideration, and lies at the bottom of all the rest.

2. 'Tis unsuitable to the *genius* of the gospel, and expressly forbid by it. The religion of the gospel is wise and generous, the most venerable and amiable thing in all the world: 'Tis designed for the general good of mankind, in all capacities and relations of life, and to promote, not a narrow factious spirit, but a generous catholic spirit in all its votaries. It requires zeal towards the proper object of it, and condemns coldness and indifference of mind; we must be *zealously affected always in a good thing*, and be *zealous of good works*: But then as it limits and restrains the exercise of it, and prescribes the proper bounds to

to it; so it requires christian love as well as christian zeal, and good-will to mankind, as well as zeal for truth or goodness; and is very copious and abundant in it; 'tis the very complexion and make of it; the proper impress and image of it. Christian zeal is always consistent with charity, and distinguished from anger and wrath.

WHEN the disciples out of a forward zeal for their Master's honour, were for calling down *fire from heaven* upon the *Samaritanes*, who refused to entertain him, our Lord was so far from commending or approving, that he *turned and rebuked* them, and said, *Ie know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* You don't consider what temper of mind you discover; *for the son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.* q. d.

Luk. ix. 5.

" You are governed herein by human passion and carnal regards, not by a right zeal. That is not the temper of the gospel dispensation, or suitable to the design of my coming into the world. Your zeal for God must not make you destroy the lives of his creatures; no, not the most ungrateful and unworthy. I came to save the souls of men, not to destroy their lives."

THE Apostle reckons it among the *works of the flesh*, and puts it in the catalogue of the most hateful crimes, of which he says, *They who do such things shall*

Gal. v. 20.

not inherit the kingdom of God; for what we render emulations is ζήλοι in a bad sense, and signifies an evil zeal. The

Jam. iii.
13.

Apostle James says, Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you; let him shew out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom; but if there is bitter envying and strife in your hearts, &c. Where bitter zeal stands opposed to meekness of wisdom, which he requires in a good conversation. And he

Ver. 17.

says, The wisdom which is from above, or descends from heaven, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated; 'tis like the pure and calm region from whence it comes. But the fiery bitter zeal is not from God, or from heaven: 'Tis an impure flame, a spark from another quarter, and as the Apostle says of the fiery

Ver. 6.

tongue, it sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell. And this is plainly intimated, when he says, The wisdom which is from beneath, which is implied in the opposite expression, is earthly, sensual, devilish: 'Tis worldly, carnal, diabolical, and as widely distant from the former as heaven is from hell. 'Tis a vile offspring, and of a base and ignoble descent: It may well be ashamed of its original. And is not this utterly unsuitable to the genius of the gospel, and the proper temper of a disciple of Christ; and the highest

highest dishonour to it too, which is so contrary to the design, the precept, the spirit of Christ?

3. IT *abates* our zeal for things which are truly great. When our zeal runs out upon improper objects, or to an undue degree, and is taken up about little things, and to an evident excess, as particular opinions and circumstances of things; it draws off so much of our zeal from the greatest things of religion, which are more worthy our regard; as the cutting a river into many lesser channels, drains off the water and weakens the stream. So it must necessarily be, and by unavoidable consequence. The reason is, That our minds, by the weakness of their powers, and narrowness of their views, cannot be very intent upon many things at once, and especially things of so different a kind from one another; as we cannot look stedfastly at several objects at the same time. While men are over-zealous for their peculiar opinions, and modes of acting, which are of less value and consequence, they will of course be more cold about the great and unquestionable truths and duties of religion, which are of the greatest excellence and moment, and stand connected with acceptance and happiness. While they are zealously possessed and employed about the rituals and forms of religion, and out-

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ward observances, they will have less zeal to spare for the essentials and vitals of it, without which it cannot subsist, and which require all their zeal, and the utmost concern of mind.

So we plainly find it in experience, and so it always was. The bigotted zealots of all parties among christians, are more indifferent and less concerned about the greatest things in religion, in which they have other christians with them; than for the less and more inconsiderable things, in which they are by themselves. We sometimes see that the greatest degrees of sound knowledge and piety, the most exemplary goodness and usefulness of life, is not able to protect men from reproach and violence, only because they differ in a favourite point, or can't comply with a human appointment. Sometimes zeal against the rituals and externals of religion, have run men into unreasonable jealousies and great uncharitableness. They *judge or despise* one another, upon these accounts. This naturally tends to abate our zeal where it ought to be employed, and to what is most proper and worthy of it. Instead of joining together with one heart in the common christian cause, and *walking, so far as we have attained, by the same rule,* we run into parties, and keep up the greatest distance. Hereupon,

Rom. xiv.
3.

4. 'TIS the root of great *disorder* and mischief in the world. A furious unruly zeal breaks through all restraints, and runs into the greatest disorders. No ties of nature or reason, no considerations or motives of religion, can keep it within any bounds: 'Tis like a hot unruly horse, which cannot be *held in with bit and bridle*, but throws his rider, or runs away with him. Thus it sometimes violates all the laws of friendship, and sets them at a distance who have lived long in the near relations of life, and with the greatest intimacies and endearments, and makes the *gospel of peace*, through their weakness and folly, the occasion and instrument of discord, and, according to our Lord's prediction, of *bringing a sword*, and *not peace*; and the *father and the mother-in-law rising up against the son and daughter-in-law*; and a *man's foes becoming those of his own house*. It breeds animosity of mind, and *envying and grudging one at another*; unkindness, and ill-will; it may be, hatred and injuries. So we read, of *variance, emulation, wrath, strife, Gal. v. 20. envyings*. The eagerness of their zeal makes them stiff and tenacious of their own opinion, unyielding and incompilant to others. And this produces estrangement of heart, alienation of affection, breeds ill-blood and leaves a bad impression behind it. And this often grows into parties and
factions

factions in the christian church ; the *con-*
 Aēt xv.39. *tention is so sharp*, like that between *Paul*
 and *Barnabas*, that *they part asunder*.
 This makes different sects and different com-
 munion, and rends and tears not only the
 garment, but the body of Christ. This
 often issues in great distractions in the chri-
 stian church, as well as private differences
 and animosity, to the destruction of chri-
 stian love, the weakening the christian in-
 terest, and dishonour of the christian name.
 So the Apostle mentions it as a great point
 of carnality among the *Corinthians*, That
 1 Cor.iii.1. these were *envyings, strife and divisions* :
 And he mentions *seditions and heresies*,
 1 Cor.iii.1. which signify *divisions* and *factions*, along
 Gal.v. 20. with *emulation, wrath, strife*, as the na-
 tural issue and offspring. The Apostle
James traces it up to this fountain-head :
 Jam.iii.16. *Where envy and strife is, there is confu-*
sion and every evil work, ζῆλος, the *bitter*
zeal mentioned in the foregoing verse, is
 attended with *strife*, or contentions, and
 introduces universal disorder wherever it
 prevails. I think I may say, That almost
 all the differences and divisions, the parties
 and persecution among christians in every
 age, have been greatly owing to the work-
 ings of ungoverned zeal for lesser opinions,
 or outward forms. The earliest differences
 among christians, in the Apostles times
 and in those immediately following; the open

open rupture between the *Greek* and *Latin* church; the grand division between the *Papist*, and *Protestant*; and the lesser divisions among the *Protestants* themselves, and the sects and parties into which they are split; have been generally owing to an excess of zeal on one side or other, for things not essential to christianity, or of any great consequence to it; it may be sometimes, disagreeable, or even contrary to it.

YEA, it has sometimes produced quarrels, and open hostilities, run into tumults and violence, not only to the mutual injuring one another, but destroying the civil peace, and quiet of the world about them. For so the Apostle says, *Whence* Jam. iv. 1. *come wars and fightings among you; come they not hence, even from your lusts, which are in your members?* The pride and ambition of the great, and the zeal and animosities of lesser people, and they are equally *lusts in the members*, have sometimes put the world about them into a flame; given occasion to unjust wars in kingdoms and states, and introduced violence and blood, and all the confusion and calamities of the world. A false zeal for opinion and party, when it gets the ascendant, is blind and deaf, unattentive to its own, or

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others light, and is like so much *wild-fire*, which runs hissing and burning all before it. It spreads desolation and ruin wherever it comes, and lays waste all about it. And how prodigious is the evil and danger of a mistaken and intemperate zeal, when all this is laid together, and brought into one account?

I shall close the discourse with a double practical remark, the result of what has been said, and which may serve to direct the conduct of our zeal. Let us be careful on the one hand, that our zeal be well *informed*, and governed by proper light; that it may not be a *mistaken* zeal. None are so rash and adventurous as those in the dark; and an ignorant zeal is found by great experience, to be more troublesome, and more dangerous, than can easily be imagined. 'Tis blind and unreasonable, and there is no effectual cure but by light. Regulate your zeal by the nature of the object, and the rule of truth. Let us be careful that all our zeal be *in a good thing*; and *according to knowledge*: That it be well weighed and considered in our minds, and directed and warranted by the word of God; and be a wise and reasonable thing which we can justify and approve to our own minds; that

that we may not be found at last to have been zealous for a *mistake*. Let us have no zeal for what is *evil*, or what is *little*; but fix our zeal upon what is unquestionably *good*, and of considerable *moment*; let it keep the strait discernible line of truth and duty, and in some measure, keep up to it too. And let us, on the other hand, keep our zeal within due bounds, and guard against the excess of it; that it may not be an *intemperate* zeal, and produce such dismal effects. Let it be proportioned to the *quantity*, as well as the *quality* of its object, and in a due conformity to its true nature; that you may have only so much zeal as the nature of the thing requires, and have all that zeal which is proper to it. Let it always keep its proper place and sphere of action, and not burst its orb, and fly about in disorder. Let it consist with every other grace and duty, and never be suffered to destroy the being, or disturb the exercise of any one. And when our zeal is thus wise and regular, *according to knowledge*, and in due degree, how excellent and lovely will it appear; how useful and serviceable will it be in the christian life? It will be a *celestial fire* in our breasts, which will make our *hearts burn within us*; preserve always a gentle heat, and animate
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to vigour in all our actions, whatsoever are the difficulties of duty, or trials of life. And it will be a noble preparation for *heaven*, which is a state of perfect purity, and fervent love; and for the society of *Angels*, who are represented as *flames of fire*, and serve God *day and night for ever and ever*.

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